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July 5, 2016

GWU Team Gains Missions Experience in 10-Day Trip Through Four Countries

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Through food ministries for the impoverished, worship music with children and discipleship to adults, Gardner-Webb University students

extended God’s love to the people of Latin America during a recent cultural immersion trip. Dr. Terry Casino, professor of missiology in the GWU School of Divinity, led the group experience through Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico, as part of the school’s Missiology and Intercultural Studies Concentration curriculum.

Zach Emory visits with children in Peru.

“A missiologist once said that missions work is caught rather than taught. By going overseas this summer, divinity students had the opportunity to see for themselves what God is doing outside their comfort zone in North America and fulfill their own share of the Central Commission to make disciples of all nations,” Casino shared. “Collectively, the team ministered to over a thousand people in four countries in a span of 10 days.”

Students interacted with residents through praise activities at local churches, education programs for children and aid for the poor, as well as cultural exploration by dining on native cuisine and visiting popular attractions. “By gaining a better understanding of alternative cultures, we become more capable in presenting the Gospel within contexts other than our own, relating the good news of Christ to their circumstances by stepping over the cultural boundaries which tend to separate us,” explained Zach Emory, of Forest City, N.C., a Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Religion student. “We live life in their shoes, viewing the world through their eyes.”

Angie Littlefair ministers to residents of Mexico.

Emory and other students led songs and accompanying motions for several hundred children during a visit to Ecuador, where youth received Christ as a result of the ministry. The Gardner-Webb team felt a return of that blessing during travel in Colombia, through the service and hospitality of their hosts and the kindness and generosity of street vendors and other local residents.

In Peru, the group participated in a food ministry that connected Master of Divinity student Angie Littlefair, of Concord, N.C., with a woman who asked for prayer to help in her search for a church home. The next morning, the woman attended a local church with the GWU contingent and she connected with the ministry's leadership, steps toward an answer to her prayers.

The Gardner-Webb group visited with the people of Ecuador, as well as Peru, Colombia and Mexico.

Littlefair was also among those who ministered to the families of terminally ill patients at a Mexico hospital, including a group of women who expressed an interest in learning more about Jesus Christ. After sharing the Gospel with them, Littlefair witnessed as the women professed their faith.

“This experience has given me confidence to do what God has called me to do as a missionary in His Kingdom, even if what I’m asked to do might not be so comfortable,” Littlefair assessed. “It has offered me many opportunities through the networks I have built to serve in many places in South America and Mexico. It has opened doors for the future for places I can go to practice my call into ministry.”

Students who participated in the trip included:

Granville Casino, of Boiling Springs, N.C.

Dennis Costner, of Kings Mountain, N.C.

Zach Emory, of Forest City, N.C.

Angie Littlefair, of Concord, N.C.

Trevor MacPherson, of Greenville, S.C.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).